

so far as human affairs can be gauged it cannot be overthrown. The nation is generally content and the people love him because he has no mistresses nor favourites, because he does not spare himself nor sacrifice anything to his pleasures. He does not, however, appear to be satisfied. The little success gained up till now disgusts him, and he is embarrassed by the weight of affairs he is charged with from all quarters, and he cannot get rid of them quickly enough. At the end of the last campaign he said to one of his friends, from whom I learnt it, that he was tired of the figure he made in the world, and that he was often tempted to leave the world in order to retire to one of his German estates and lead a private life there. This friend, who by his great age, his experience and services, had acquired much credit with him (William) loudly upbraided him for having thoughts, unworthy of a great man, destructive of his reputation and his friends if they were known.¹

It is certain, however, that there was one moment when William did seriously consider the question of abdicating. That was in December 1698, when Parliament after the treaty of Ryswick determined to reduce the army to a number William rightly deemed insufficient for the security of England. The evidence for this is contained in a letter from Somers to Lord Shrewsbury, dated December 29, 1698.

His resolution is, when the next Wednesday's business

is over, to come to the Parliament, and tell
them, that he
came over to rescue the nation from the ruin
impending
over them, in which he succeeded, and had
brought them to
the end of a dangerous war, without any great
misfortune;
that now they had peace, and might provide
for their own
safety ; that he saw they were entertaining
distrusts and
jealousies of him, so as not to do what was
necessary for

¹ Report of M. de la Tour, envoy of the Duke of Savoy, to
his master
(1692). Kramer, Archives de la Maison d'Orange-Nassau,
3d Ser., vol. i,
pp. xxviii-xxxi.